

‘Europe — Schuman’s Unfinished Symphony’ from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (29–20 June 1968)

Caption: On 29 and 30 June 1968, in its comments on the completion of the tariff union among the Six, due to take place on 1 July 1968, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung paints a critical picture of the state of the European Economic Community (EEC).

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Dürrmeier, Hans ; R Herausgeber Proebst, Hermann. 29.-30.06.1968, Nr. 156; 24. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Europas Unvollendete - von Schuman", auteur:Thoma, Franz , p. 4.

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Europe — Schuman's Unfinished Symphony

by Franz Thoma

The curtain goes up, we applaud — Europe, the Unfinished Symphony. Yet we do not want to applaud too enthusiastically — nor should we. Europe's unfinished customs union opens on 1 July. We might justifiably say it was a landmark, if that were not such a hackneyed phrase. If, twenty years ago, just as our new currency was being introduced, someone had foretold that, as from 1 July 1968, we should be able travel from Paris, Rome or Brussels unmolested by customs officers and, our luggage stuffed with as many goods as we wanted, we would have said that he was telling fairy stories. The reality is that, as from Monday, there are no more customs duties between the countries of what has become known as the Europe of Six — at least officially. And this momentous event has taken place a year and a half earlier than was laid down in the textbook of the Treaty of Rome.

However, let us not shed tears of joy, for it is only with dry eyes that we can reorganise the unfinished work of the customs union. Although we no longer have internal customs duties in traffic between the six countries, that is a far cry from the free movement of goods. The visible customs barriers have been torn down entirely in accordance with the Treaty — the *invisible* barriers, on the other hand, which are so much more difficult to overcome, have been strengthened, and some new ones have even been erected. It starts with beef cattle — it is not customs barriers that impede this traffic but veterinary regulations. It carries on with cars — fiscal manipulation keeps competition at bay. The same applies to all the various taxes by which the free movement of goods within the EEC is manipulated. So, as from Monday, holidaymakers will rub their eyes in astonishment at the customs barrier when they see, just as they always have, the lines of trucks ahead of and alongside him waiting to be searched by customs — just as they always have.

A broken spine

Hidden customs barriers reflect more than mere fear of competition, which of course will not go away after 1 July in the industries of the six EEC countries. Rather, they reflect the development of more mean-minded attitudes to Europe on the part of the individual Member States. Hence, after periods in which radically different aims were pursued, the Brussels technocracy has now largely reverted to just getting on with routine affairs. While the economy might have been first in line for sacrifices in the cause of the EEC's political aims, no one — especially in Paris — showed interest in the achievement of a political EEC. Hallstein's resignation, demanded by France, was not just a personal problem for the former President. It showed Brussels just who is the master in Europe. Since then, no fruitful idea, no motivating proposal nor even a spark of animation has emerged from the administrative silos in Brussels, on which European citizens at all events look with some displeasure.

The formulae of the European technocrats are entirely alien to him — worse than that. A tangled web of agricultural market regulations raises justified doubts, even in the most open-minded citizens, whether the original aim is still in focus: not a grand cartel, but an extended market in which goods are produced for the benefit of all at the most advantageous location, where anyone can work freely and with equal rights wherever he wants. He cannot do so now — or not yet, we hope.

Such hope depends not on Brussels but on the European capitals. Indeed, anyone seeking to establish who is to blame, firstly, for the stagnation of the EEC and, secondly, for so much that is illogical in this extended market will find the culprit or culprits in the Member States. Since France some years ago decided that it could afford the self-indulgence of an open breach of the Treaty, the back of the Brussels technocracy has been broken, and signs of movement have grown ever weaker. Since everyone knows that Europe without France would not be Europe — and the Government in Paris knows that best of all — it is France which is setting the pace. At first, it was the pace of an unwilling participant but now, given the dire state of the French economy, it is the limping gait of the lame.

Since it saw off Britain, which all the other EEC partners wanted to see in the Community from the outset, even if only to involve it in financing the various funds, de Gaulle's France has always imposed its special

interests. It has blackmailed a Community whose existence we owe to another France, the France of that great European, Robert Schuman. If we cast our glance in the other direction and seek those who, for the sake of good will and because of political burdens from the past, have always honoured the Europe bills presented in Paris, we cannot avoid seeing ourselves in that role. In the future, too, we shall be asked to pay up, if France is to get to grips with the financial consequences of its internal turmoil, and to show forbearance if France seeks new exemptions and even reverts to open import restrictions.

This situation should be viewed quite dispassionately, *without* complaint. Anyone who considered merely the many disappointments in the everyday process of European affairs, from the price of rapeseed to the policy towards Eastern Europe, could easily lose sight of what is good about the EEC and its ambitious aims. Let us not forget that the Treaty of Rome is silently at work in important areas. It is creating new realities which cannot be undone. To give an example: the Netherlands, Belgium and parts of North Rhine-Westphalia have, thanks to the Common Market, become *a single* industrial area with internal interdependencies which, under normal circumstances, it will be impossible to dismantle. Thus, the automatic nature of the Treaty overcomes of itself many a quirk of individuality in the Member States.

The technological future

All the EEC partner countries are also well aware that together they are stronger. To say that we shall only be masters of our economic future if we work together may sound like a commonplace. However, anyone who considers simply the technological challenges of modern industrial development and, at the same time, appreciates the situation of this little old continent doing business between two young giants, the USA and the Soviet Union, will, however, quickly realise that even the Europe of Six is too small for the task.

Little Europe is thus aptly named! With such a prospect in view, it comes as a shock to encounter the kind of small-minded nationalism which — to quote but one example — has hitherto prevented a German pharmacist and a French pharmacist from being trained in such a way that either can practise unhindered in either country. The Europe of Six is an unfinished Europe. Let us hope that those who are able to complete it are not yet born.